

Rolanda Perkins Heart Story - Heart Attack Survivor

It never dawned on Rolanda Perkins that she could be at risk for a heart attack. No one in her family had a history of heart disease. She was even exercising regularly for almost a year before it hit.

"I was planning my sister's 40th birthday party, and I started feeling tightness in my chest. Nothing eased the pain," she says.

Figuring it was indigestion, she went to bed one night only to be awoken by more intense pain at 3am. That's when she decided to go to the Emergency Room where she was admitted immediately.

"I realized something was wrong when everyone at the hospital started moving really quickly. Then I started to cry," she remembers.

Rolanda was in total shock when her doctor told her she was having a heart attack. She was given nitroglycerin and underwent an angiogram, which is a cardiac catheterization procedure.

After the heart attack, the uncertainties and demands persisted. Her job had always been intensely stressful. She worked the late-night shift, so her hours were always erratic and vacation time was hard to come by.

Rolanda turned inward and developed feelings of depression and anxiety, carefully shielding it from her family so as not to worry them, but when she was told she'd have to take several medications for the rest of her life, the fire in her came out.

"That's when I said, "No way!" and vowed to change my circumstances," recalls Rolanda.

"I started sharing my story at church. I started reading and listening to inspirational tapes. As I told my story, it motivated others to share their stories about their health-related issues," she says.

Prior to her heart event, Rolanda didn't bother with checking nutritional labels. She didn't set goals much either. Today, she's already run a half-marathon with the ladies at her church. Her faith, family and friends play a huge role in her recovery.

"My family is always supportive of what I'm doing. They're my biggest cheerleaders," she attests.

Rolanda didn't know anything about heart disease before her experience, but what she knows now fuels her forward.

"I Go Red for myself and for all of the important ladies in my life. I don't want this to strike them as it did me."